

Remarks of
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Office of Commercial Space Transportation
Dedication of the Oklahoma Spaceport
Burns Flat, Oklahoma
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Good morning.

To Bill Khourie and his staff, Joe and Kim; to the OSIDA Board members and Chairman Ken McGill; thank you so much for asking me to be with you on this special day when the heavens are wide and smiling on Oklahoma.

When Bill Khourie, Oklahoma's Spaceport Executive Director, first asked me if I would join you on this historic occasion, I said: "Of course, I will."

Then Bill began to tell me that he wasn't sure of the date. "Fine," I said. What Bill soon learned, I hope, was that short of driving here, I was going to be here.

Over the years, I have come to know, to respect and to admire what a very special, mild mannered, persevering, and unfailing gentleman Bill Khourie is. Bill has done so much to ignite the enthusiasm and commitment that make dreams come true. He is a man who walks by faith, never veering from his course ... and that's exactly what this spaceport needs.

It's great to see that beautiful vehicle in the back of this hangar, the vehicle from Rocketplane. It's good to see John Herrington who will pilot that vehicle. And it's also great to see Senator Gilmer Capps who has been a huge supporter and friend to space.

Let me also recognize two members of our FAA staff who are the persons responsible for delivering the license for this spaceport, Randy Maday and Doug Graham.

You picked a great day in history to hold this event. Eighty years ago this very day, and 1200 miles from this place, Charles Lindbergh took *The Spirit of St. Louis* up for 12 test flights over San Diego.

A little more than two weeks later, he flew the biggest test flight of all ... all the way from New York to Paris, non-stop, alone.

For that flight he would win the esteem of millions and a place in history. For the story he wrote about his flight, he would win a Pulitzer Prize.

Today, at Clinton-Sherman, a new story begins with a place in history and the adventure of a lifetime within reach.

Right here at Clinton-Sherman, tomorrow begins today.

In a world more eager than ever to find out what space flight is like, Oklahoma has officially decided to find out for itself.

To all of you ... to the leadership in government in both the executive and legislative branch; to the leaders of OSIDA who worked so hard to reach this day; and to all of you ready to reach into the future and claim a piece of it for Oklahoma ... let me say, “Congratulations and well done.”

Almost exactly three years ago to the day, I was in Oklahoma City to speak at the Oklahoma Aerospace Summit and Expo. That day, I made a promise ... and a prediction.

The promise came in the form of my personal commitment to work with my staff and the rest of the FAA to support Oklahoma’s goal to become a center of space activities.

And the prediction ... was that there was no doubt in my mind that Oklahoma will play a key role in the future of space transportation.

Today, I want to say ... welcome to the future!

Oklahoma now has a license for the operation of a launch site. On your own initiative, with wisdom and vision and plenty of hard work, you have created an opportunity-environment that puts you in position to capitalize on the next level of adventure and commerce in space.

Private citizens want to experience space. It's not that they want to "go where no man has gone before." They just want to go, too. And before long, they will.

But they'll need a place to start.

Two years ago, at the International Space Development Conference in Washington, a paper was presented on types of spaceports. And one of the conclusions was this common-sense piece of wisdom and I quote: "The space tourism business, with its many advantages, will not be able to get fully under way without a parallel effort at building the spaceport architectures to support the business" on the ground.

In other words ... developers and their rockets will meet customers and their dreams at a place like this to begin their journey.

How will that convert into dollars and cents?

Sorry. I work on Independence Avenue not Wall Street. But if that means I don't have a crystal ball for tomorrow's

payoff, at least I do have a view of history where, years ago, airlines built landing sites, with restaurants and hotels to serve the passengers; and where those same airlines created a demand that required larger, more powerful, increasingly safer vehicles, and created jobs for people who wanted to work hard to make things happen.

Will something like that happen in the world of commercial space and private human space flight? People like you and the interest you attract will play a central role in providing an answer.

But I can tell you this much.

- I have been around long enough to see the commercial space transportation industry establish itself as a revenue producer and a job creator.**
- I have seen the idea of private human space flight move from the pages of novels to the front pages of the newspapers.**
- I have seen private entrepreneurs joining hands with state and community leaders to create spaceports. It's been done right here in Oklahoma because of terrific leadership, hard work and the wisdom that always moves pioneers to find a way ... to find their way.**
- I have seen the President of the United States endorse a U.S. Space Transportation Policy that says: "The United States Government must capitalize on the entrepreneurial spirit of the U.S. private sector, which offers ... opportunities to open new commercial markets, including public space travel ..."**

- **I have seen the Congress of the United States enact the Commercial Space Launch Amendments Act of 2004 that gave the go-ahead to private human space flight and new authorities to my office in the FAA.**
- **And, within the last 80 days, I have seen FAA regulations take effect governing crew and space flight participants in private human space flight, and have seen the FAA issue final regulations for experimental permits for reusable suborbital rockets along with a sample application that can be used by new entrants to guide their way.**

Because of all that ... and so much more, I will tell you today what I told our annual conference this February.

As early as the end of next year, I expect piloted vehicles to undergo tests in preparation for the imminent debut of regularly scheduled service for private passengers traveling to space.

I believe that in the time it takes children born today to earn a master's degree ... perhaps sooner ... it is quite possible that we will have point-to-point commercial space service and at least the beginning of privately operated orbital space flights.

In the time between now and then, there is enormous potential for this industry to branch out, to build on the foundation of space tourism and provide additional commercial services, and also to serve more and more space needs from both NASA and the Department of Defense.

Do we have competitors? Yes, we have competitors. A study, by a British group, on space tourism put it this way: “There is no reason why Europe should not be leading the growth of the private space flight industry.”

The same report, however, left no doubt who was in the lead. We are.

It’s vital that we continue to press our advantage, not just because we have adventure to offer and not just because there’s money to make, although both of those are cornerstones of this effort.

But even more than that ... and even though this is a work of private enterprise ... it seems to me that what we are doing now in private human space flight sends a message world-wide that America is on the move; that excellence is stirring here; and that we are perfectly willing to say, “We don’t know what the next ten years will mean for the United States in general ... or for Oklahoma in particular ... but those ten years better be ready, because here we come.”

On that note, I think it’s probably time that I brought these remarks to a close. So let me finish this way.

As you know better than anyone, sixty-four years ago, the musical “Oklahoma!” opened on Broadway. I can remember from my small town in Alabama, joining my classmates to sing this song at a May Day celebration. But during its earlier trial run in New Haven, Connecticut, the play had a different name, one equally appropriate to this place and its purpose.

When the musical opened in New Haven it was called: “Away We Go.”

How fitting for a day like this.

But, you know, one of the other names, suggested by the producers, still seems to have a certain appeal all its own right down to, and perhaps especially, this day.

That name was ... “Party Tonight.”

Need I say more?

Thank you very much.